

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY JOINS COLLEAGUES IN SPONSORING PRESCRIPTION DRUG FAIRNESS FOR SENIORS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined U.S. Representative Tom Allen (D-ME) and more than 100 House Democrats in introducing the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 2001. Hinchey spoke at a press conference to announce the bill, which would allow Medicare beneficiaries to purchase prescription drugs at discounts averaging 40 percent.

"Until we have guaranteed a prescription drug benefit to all Medicare beneficiaries, we must give senior citizens and the disabled relief from the exorbitant cost of medicine," said Hinchey. "This bill would save a typical Medicare recipient hundreds of dollars a year and won't cost the government a penny. It's a good interim solution."

The Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act would allow U.S. pharmacies to purchase drugs for Medicare beneficiaries at the drugs' "average foreign price," the average price that the drug manufacturer realizes on name brand drugs sold in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom. It is estimated that the bill would reduce prices on these drugs by 40 percent on average.

"Right now people on Medicare pay twice as much for their drugs as consumers in other developed countries," Hinchey added. "For some drugs, seniors and disabled persons pay over ten times more than the drug companies' favored customers."

Hinchey continues to be a strong proponent of a guaranteed, comprehensive prescription drug benefit as part of Medicare. In the interim, he has supported other efforts to reduce the burden of high drug costs for seniors and the disabled, including previous versions of the bill introduced today and legislation to allow pharmacies and wholesalers to reimport drugs from other countries. Prices for brand name drugs in other developed countries are significantly lower than in the United States, ranging from 31 percent lower in the United Kingdom to a 48 percent gap in Italy.

The legislation announced today was introduced by Allen; Hinchey is an original cosponsor.